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ABSTRACT

To provide direction to school systems and individual schools as they plan, develop, and implement new programs, this guide sets forth criteria for curricula geared toward gifted and talented students. The criteria are also intended as a tool for schools to use in assessing and improving their current offerings for students. An introduction provides a definition of "gifted and talented" as defined by the Maryland State Department of Education and discusses goals of gifted education. Six major program components are then addressed in outline format: (1) identification of students, (2) the instructional program, (3) teacher selection, (4) staff development, (5) program management, and (6) evaluation. (BJD)

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CRITERIA FOR EXCELLENCE

GIFTED & TALENTED PROGRAM GUIDELINES

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Language and Learning Improvement Branch
Division of Instruction
Maryland State Department of Education

1983

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FOREWORD

All students in Maryland's schools must be provided educational opportunities appropriate to their individual abilities and which will enable them to reach their maximum potential. Gifted and talented students are one group which has unique abilities and needs. This publication is designed to help educators make appropriate modifications of programs to meet these students' needs and to challenge their abilities.

The CRITERIA FOR EXCELLENCE: GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAM GUIDELINES was developed as a cooperative effort by staff of the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Instruction, and personnel having responsibilities for gifted and talented programs in the local school systems. The State Task Force Report on Gifted and Talented Education recommends endorsement and implementation of these criteria.

I trust educators in Maryland will find this document of value in planning, operating, and evaluating programs for gifted and talented students.

DAVID W. HORNBECK
State Superintendent of Schools

INTRODUCTION

This publication sets forth the criteria for excellence in programming for gifted and talented students. Six major program components have been addressed:

1. Identification of Students
2. Instructional Program
3. Teacher Selection
4. Staff Development
5. Program Management
6. Evaluation

Criteria which establish optimal practices are listed for each program component. They define "what should be" in a good program for gifted/talented students.

The criteria provide direction to school systems and individual schools as they plan, develop, and implement new programs. They are also intended as a tool for schools to use in assessing and improving their current offerings for gifted and talented students.

The Maryland State Department of Education recognizes the importance of providing all children and youth an educational program appropriate to their individual abilities, interests, and needs and which gives them opportunities to develop their abilities to the maximum. Gifted and talented students, like other groups of individuals in the general school population, possess unique potential and needs which can be addressed only through modifying the regular curriculum and designing specialized programs.

Maryland has defined by law the gifted and talented student as "**an elementary or secondary student who is identified by professionally qualified individuals as having outstanding abilities in the area of:**

General intellectual capabilities;
Specific academic aptitudes; or
The creative, visual or performing arts.

A gifted and talented child needs different services beyond those normally provided by the regular school programs in order to develop his potential." (Annotated Code of Maryland 8-201, 202).

By virtue of this basic definition Maryland subscribes to the multidimensionality of giftedness, seeking to develop programs that serve students who are intellectually gifted and also those students with creative abilities and outstanding potential in the visual and performing arts. The goal of gifted education in Maryland is to identify potential, nurture it, and develop productive behavior whenever giftedness exists. It is estimated that at least five percent of Maryland's total school population will require program modification because of their gifts and talents. While the number of gifted/talented students who need a modified program will vary, they exist in every school setting.

CRITERIA

1.0 IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS

An identification process should ensure that all gifted/talented students are identified so that they can be appropriately served. It is important that the process used identify students with potential for outstanding achievement as well as those who have demonstrated superior achievement. Appropriate procedures and criteria for identifying giftedness should be developed for each of the various areas: general intellectual ability; specific academic aptitude; creative and productive thinking; visual and performing arts; leadership. Information obtained through the identification process about students' specific abilities and program-related needs should serve as a basis for planning the student's instructional program. In this way the identification process is an integral part of the overall instructional program and should enhance the responsiveness of the school to the needs of all students.

1.1 THE PROCESS FOR IDENTIFYING STUDENTS HAS SEVERAL STAGES.

1.1.1 A broad-based screening of the total school population is conducted to ensure that all potentially gifted and talented students have an opportunity to be considered.

1.1.2 An in-depth assessment is made of those students meeting the screening criteria to gather additional information concerning their specific aptitudes and educational needs.

1.1.3 Placement is made in an appropriate program.

1.2 THE IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES AND CRITERIA ARE CLEARLY STATED AND UNIFORMLY IMPLEMENTED THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL SYSTEM.

1.3 IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES AND CRITERIA ARE SPECIFIC TO THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF GIFTEDNESS BEING ASSESSED AND ARE DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE SPECIFIC PROGRAMMING WHICH IS PROVIDED.

1.4 A SCHOOL-BASED COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF TEACHERS, THE PRINCIPAL OR VICE PRINCIPAL, AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBERS COLLECTS AND ANALYZES DATA, MAINTAINS APPROPRIATE RECORDS, AND MAKES PROFESSIONAL DECISIONS ABOUT APPROPRIATE PLACEMENT OF STUDENTS.

1.5 THE IDENTIFICATION PROCESS USES MULTIPLE INDICATORS OF GIFTEDNESS WITH INFORMATION OBTAINED THROUGH A VARIETY OF PROCEDURES AND FROM MANY INDEPENDENT SOURCES.

1.5.1 Procedures for obtaining information about students include *objective assessment methods* such as group and individual tests of achievement, general ability, specific aptitudes, and creativity.

1.5.2 Procedures for obtaining information about students include *subjective assessment methods* such as nominations, observations, pupil product evaluations, auditions, rating scales, biographical data, interviews, and grades.

1.5.3 Information about students is obtained from multiple sources including teachers, counselors, peers, parents, community members, subject area experts, and the students themselves.

1.6 STUDENT PLACEMENT DECISIONS ARE BASED UPON MULTIPLE CRITERIA. NO SINGLE CRITERION (I.E., TEST SCORE, OTHER MEASUREMENT, TEACHER RECOMMENDATION, OR NOMINATION) SOLELY DETERMINES PLACEMENT DECISIONS.

1.7 IDENTIFICATION OF GIFTED/TALENTED STUDENTS IS AN ON-GOING PROCESS EXTENDING FROM SCHOOL ENTRY THROUGH GRADE TWELVE.

1.7.1 Opportunities are provided for students to be considered for placement in gifted/talented programs throughout their school experience.

1.7.2 A reassessment of students in gifted/talented programs is made at least annually to review appropriateness of placement.

1.8 INSTRUMENTS AND PROCEDURES USED IN THE SELECTION PROCESS ARE AS NON-BIASED AS POSSIBLE WITH RESPECT TO RACE, CULTURAL OR ECONOMIC

BACKGROUND, RELIGION, NATIONAL ORIGIN, SEX, OR HANDICAPPING CONDITION.

1.9 INSTRUCTIONALLY USEFUL INFORMATION ABOUT INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS OBTAINED DURING THE IDENTIFICATION PROCESS IS USED TO DETERMINE APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS AND IS COMMUNICATED TO THE INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF REGARDLESS OF FINAL PLACEMENT DECISIONS.

1.10 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IDENTIFICATION PROCESS INCLUDES TRAINING FOR TOTAL SCHOOL STAFF IN CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTED/TALENTED STUDENTS, THE IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES AND CRITERIA, AND INSTRUMENTS AND TECHNIQUES USED TO IDENTIFY GIFTED/TALENTED STUDENTS.

2.0 INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

An appropriate program for the gifted and talented reflects modification of *content* (what is taught and when it is taught—sequence and pacing) *instructional strategies* (how it is taught) and the *setting* (the environment in which learning occurs).

The regular instructional program must be modified and adapted to meet the unique learning styles, learning rates, interests, abilities, and needs of gifted and talented students. The differentiated instructional program for the gifted includes both elements that are different and elements that are similar to those in the regular program for their chronological peers. While some aspects of the regular curriculum will need to be adapted, others will need to be added which may be quite unique for the gifted/talented population.

CONTENT

2.1 THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES FOR GIFTED/TALENTED STUDENTS TO DEVELOP PROFICIENCY IN CONCEPTS AND SKILLS OF THE REGULAR CURRICULUM.

2.1.1 A preassessment is made to determine what students already know and provisions are made for rapid, efficient learning of concepts and skills not yet acquired.

2.1.2 Extended learning experiences are provided for more in-depth examination of topics present in the regular curriculum and the examination of topics related to, but not included in, the regular classroom.

2.2 CONTENT OF THE CURRICULUM FOCUSES ON THE MAJOR CONCEPTS AND PROCESSES CENTRAL TO THE GIVEN SUBJECT AREA.

2.3 GREATER EMPHASIS IS PLACED ON DEVELOPMENT AND APPLICATION OF CREATIVE AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS.

2.4 CURRICULUM CONTENT INCLUDES INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES REQUIRING THE INTEGRATION OF BOTH CONCEPTS AND METHODOLOGY FROM VARIOUS DISCIPLINES.

2.5 OPPORTUNITIES ARE PROVIDED FOR THE ACQUISITION OF A BROAD BASE OF KNOWLEDGE THROUGH THE STUDY OF A WIDE RANGE OF SUBJECTS.

2.6 A WIDE VARIETY OF APPROPRIATE RESOURCES ARE USED, INCLUDING PRIMARY SOURCES, SPECIALIZED REFERENCE MATERIALS, AND EXPERTS IN THE FIELD.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

2.7 INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR THE GIFTED PROVIDE FOR GREATER LEARNER INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATIONAL DECISION MAKING.

These include:

- Choice of materials, activities, and/or content;
- Self-evaluation of products and processes;
- Provision of diverse opportunities to create and invent in areas of individual interest;
- Choice of strategies and modalities to approach content; and
- Choice of outcomes and/or form of products.

2.8 INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR THE GIFTED ARE SELECTED TO PROMOTE AN EARLIER DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AS AN INDEPENDENT LEARNER.

These include involving the student in:

- Methodology for primary and secondary research;
- Problem-solving;
- The use of pre-determined evaluation criteria by student and teacher;
- The use of productivity expectations in the assignment of tasks; and
- The creation of functional and/or aesthetic products.

2.9 INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR THE GIFTED ARE SELECTED TO ELICIT THE STUDENTS' USE OF HIGHER LEVEL THINKING SKILLS.

These strategies include involving the student in:

- Convergent and divergent production;
- Questioning strategies which focus on analysis, synthesis, and evaluation;
- Problem seeking as well as problem solving;
- Predicting, hypothesizing, collecting and verifying data, and forming supportable conclusions; and
- Complex and abstract reasoning.

2.10 INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR THE GIFTED REQUIRE THE TEACHER TO BECOME A FACILITATOR OF LEARNING AND A MANAGER OF RESOURCES.

Teachers should:

- Provide a structure in which students are active participants;
- Use a balance between expository and inquiry approaches;
- Demonstrate a continuing development of their own knowledge base;
- Provide an environment in which continuous learning is valued and sought; and
- Provide a climate which encourages creativity and appropriate intellectual risk taking.

2.11 INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES SELECTED PROMOTE THE GIFTED STUDENT'S UNDERSTANDING OF SELF AND SOCIETY.

These include:

- Analyzing self as an individual and as a member of a group;
- Learning how to work constructively with others; and
- Learning how to modify personal and group behavior.

SETTING FOR LEARNING

2.12 A VARIETY OF INSTRUCTIONAL GROUPINGS BASED UPON INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM COMPONENTS AND THEIR OBJECTIVES, NUMBER AND NEEDS OF GIFTED/TALENTED STUDENTS, AND AVAILABLE RESOURCES ARE USED TO FACILITATE DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION.

Appropriate groupings might include:

- Total class grouping of the identified population for specified content;
- Cluster-grouping within classes;
- Cross grade-level grouping; and
- Individual study.

2.13 ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS ARE USED WHICH PROMOTE INTERACTION AMONG GIFTED STUDENTS AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL PEERS AS WELL AS AMONG THEIR INTELLECTUAL OR ARTISTIC/CREATIVE PEERS.

2.14 RESOURCES BEYOND THE SCHOOL SETTING ARE USED TO PROVIDE APPROPRIATE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES FOR GIFTED/TALENTED STUDENTS.

These might include:

- Community agencies;
- Cultural institutions;
- Industrial sites;
- Colleges and universities; and
- Experts in various fields.

3.0 TEACHER SELECTION

3.1 A PROCESS TO ENSURE THE SELECTION OF APPROPRIATE TEACHERS FOR GIFTED/TALENTED STUDENTS IS ESTABLISHED AND CLEARLY ARTICULATED.

3.2 CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF TEACHERS ARE BASED ON A SET OF COMPETENCIES AND CHARACTERISTICS SUPPORTED BY RESEARCH AS BEING IMPORTANT TO EFFECTIVE TEACHING OF THE GIFTED.

Included in this set are:

- Awareness of the cognitive and affective needs of gifted/talented students and a desire to teach them;
- Expertise in content and instructional methods;
- Ability to impart intellectual curiosity and enthusiasm for learning to students;
- High level of energy, enthusiasm, and resourcefulness;
- Ability to organize and manage instruction to provide for a balance of structure and flexibility;
- Openness to innovation and acceptance of divergent, creative thinking;
- Security in dealing with intellectual precocity;
- Ability to facilitate students' independence and development of personal responsibility for their own learning; and
- Willingness to pursue training for needed professional understanding and competencies.

4.0 STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Rapidly increasing knowledge about the developmental patterns and learning styles of the gifted and about appropriate program provisions necessitate ongoing high quality staff development as a component of successful programs.

4.1 STAFF DEVELOPMENT IS PROVIDED FOR A VARIETY OF PROFESSIONAL AUDIENCES INCLUDING TEACHERS OF THE GIFTED, OTHER TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS, GUIDANCE PERSONNEL, SUPERVISORS, CONTENT SPECIALISTS, AND OTHER CENTRAL OFFICE STAFF.

4.2 STAFF DEVELOPMENT IS PROVIDED WHICH INCLUDES A BACKGROUND OF GENERAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT GIFTEDNESS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION.

Specific content includes:

- Characteristics and identification of gifted/talented students;
- Psychology and developmental needs of the gifted;
- Need for and concept of differentiated programs;
- Development of appropriate curriculum;
- Teaching strategies for gifted students;
- Administrative alternatives and program options;
- Program implementation, evaluation, and revision; and
- Additional professional development options.

4.3 STAFF DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ARE DESIGNED TO MEET THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF THE DIFFERENT TARGET AUDIENCES.

4.3.1 The total teaching staff, school administrators, central/area office staff, and pupil service personnel should be trained in characteristics and needs of the gifted and talented, the procedures and criteria used to identify students, the meaning of differentiation, the design of the school system's program, and the criteria for selecting teachers of the gifted.

4.3.2 Teachers who work with gifted students, school administrators, and supervisory staff with responsibility for development of instructional programs for the gifted/talented should receive additional training which addresses specific ways to differentiate instruction and the development of curriculum appropriate for the gifted and talented.

4.3.3 Teachers working directly with gifted and talented students need intensive and ongoing staff development about the educational implications of the characteristics of giftedness and appropriate teaching/learning strategies.

4.3.4 School-level administrators and central office staff responsible for the management and administration of gifted and talented programs should also be trained in administrative alternatives and program options, and in the development of a system for on-going program maintenance and quality control.

4.4 STAFF DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANT'S LEVEL

OF EXPERTISE IN GIFTED EDUCATION, CURRENT ASSIGNMENT AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES, CONTENT AREA SPECIALIZATION, AND SYSTEMWIDE GOALS.

4.5 EFFECTIVE, KNOWLEDGEABLE TRAINERS ARE USED.

4.6 THE STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM PROVIDES A VARIETY OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.

These might include:

- Workshops;
- University or inservice courses;
- Conferences;
- Observation of exemplary programs and interaction with others directly involved in gifted/talented education;
- Structured classroom observation with feedback and follow-up support for the teacher; and
- Independent study.

4.7 PROCEDURES ARE ESTABLISHED FOR ON-GOING EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.

5.0 PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

5.1 A MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE EXISTS WHICH CLEARLY DELINEATES THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR GIFTED/TALENTED PROGRAMS AT THE SYSTEM AND SCHOOL LEVELS TO ENSURE THE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF PROGRAM EXCELLENCE.

5.2 THE LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM PROVIDES GENERAL PROGRAM DIRECTION.

This includes:

- Statement of program goals;
- Definition of population;
- Criteria and procedures for student selection;
- Administrative design;
- Plan for program implementation in the schools;

- Coordination to ensure continuity of programs for gifted students as they progress through school;
- Staff development programs;
- Provision for adequate support services;
- Development of uniform and practical record keeping systems; and
- Design for program evaluation.

5.3 BUILDING LEVEL ADMINISTRATORS SUPPORT PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION WITHIN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM'S GUIDELINES.

They are responsible for:
- Coordinating services for gifted/talented students in the school;
- Developing staff expertise;
- Seeking resources; and
- Providing effective communication with staff, students, parents, and community.

6.0 EVALUATION

6.1 THE EVALUATION PROCESS PROVIDES ACCURATE, TIMELY, AND RELEVANT INFORMATION TO DECISION MAKERS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT.

6.2 A SYSTEMATIC PLAN FOR ON-GOING EVALUATION IS PART OF PROGRAM PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION.

6.3 EVALUATION ASSESSES PROCESSES AND PRODUCTS OF EACH COMPONENT OF THE GIFTED/TALENTED PROGRAM.

These include:
- Identification;
- Instructional program;
- Staff training;
- Teacher selection;
- Program management; and
- The evaluation process.

6.4 THE EVALUATION PROCESS FOCUSES UPON THE DIFFERENTIATION OF PROGRAMS PROVIDED FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS. THE QUANTITY, QUALITY, AND APPROPRIATENESS OF THE EXPERIENCES PROVIDED ARE ASSESSED.

6.5 ATTENTION IS GIVEN TO THE ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT PROGRESS, INCLUDING MASTERY OF CONTENT, DEMONSTRATION OF HIGHER LEVEL THINKING SKILLS, ACHIEVEMENT IN THE SPECIFIC PROGRAM AREA(S), AND AFFECTIVE GROWTH.

6.6 DATA FOR EVALUATION IS OBTAINED FROM A VARIETY OF INSTRUMENTS, PROCEDURES, AND INFORMATION SOURCES AS APPROPRIATE.

6.7 EVALUATION RESULTS ARE COMMUNICATED IN A TIMELY AND MEANINGFUL WAY TO PROGRAM DECISION MAKERS AT THE SYSTEM AND/OR SCHOOL LEVEL AND, AS APPROPRIATE, TO STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND THE PUBLIC.

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